



**Testimony to the Housing Committee by**  
*David Fink, Policy Director, Partnership for Strong Communities*  
***Thursday, March 4, 2010***

Representative Green, Senator Gomes, members of the Housing Committee,

I am David Fink, policy director of the Partnership for Strong Communities. We are a statewide housing policy organization that engages civic and political support to solve homelessness, create affordable housing and develop strong, vibrant communities.

I am here today to briefly comment on three bills before you.

The first, SB 321, An Act Concerning the State's Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development, is designed, as we understand, to allow the state's consolidated plan to offer a full blueprint for the state's coordinated housing goals, rather than continuing DECD to also have to produce a Long-Range State Housing Plan. DECD reports that data normally included in the Long-Range plan would be available in its annual report and confining blueprint for state housing policy in the consolidated plan would better focus attention on funding priorities and avoid conflicting timetables for achieving those priorities.

The Partnership is sympathetic to DECD's efforts to avoid duplication in its work and could support the change outlined in SB 321, but only if the Consolidated Plan comprehensively lays out a coordinated strategy for maximizing state and federal funds, in conjunction with CHFA, to produce housing at very low-, low- and moderate income levels, and supportive housing and housing plus services for people who are disabled, elderly and homeless.

In this era of scarce resorts, we would be the last to compel a resource-strapped agency to do work twice. But we want to ensure that nothing is lost in the effort to plan for Connecticut's many vital housing needs.

We strongly support the second bill, SB 317, An Act Concerning Buildings Located Within the Five-Hundred-Year Floodplain. Such legislation, allowing state investment to rehabilitate existing affordable housing, will help preserve existing units at a time when the supply of affordable units is short. We believe SB302, now before the Planning and Development Committee, is a more expansive and powerful tool to accomplish that goal, but we nonetheless support SB317.

Finally, we cannot support Raised Bill 5371, an Act Concerning A Pilot Program for Affordable Housing Replacement. Allowing a replacement ratio of one new unit for each two units sold, demolished or otherwise made unavailable could severely deplete the stock of affordable units. While the criterion used in the bill might be well-meaning – allowing the 1-to-2 ratio only in municipalities where more than 10% of the housing stock is considered affordable under terms of Sect. 8-30g – it is a bad criterion. Imagine allowing two units to be destroyed for every one created in such cities as Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport or New Britain, where the affordable units total more than 10% but where they remain in short supply. That would be a big mistake.

Thank you for the chance to testify.